

December 17, 2005

Dear Sirs,

This is my written testament of my family's gratitude and appreciation of having had Mrs. Kawahine Kamakea-Ohelo's presence in our lives.

She is not related by blood nor called aunty simply out of our cultural heritage but has become our aunty out of a pure heartfelt aloha and our loving respect.

Aunty's influence in our lives began in the early 90's. Being a young couple with small children we tried hard to keep "it" together. John had two full time jobs and we lived in a nice apartment in down town Honolulu. All too soon we found ourselves homeless, jobless and hooked on drugs.

If anyone knows what rock bottom feels like, my family lived it. I still feel tremendous regret for having my children experience such despair. Exposing them to the harsh elements, living in a tent, out of coolers, propane stoves and having to use the public restrooms is difficult enough. Having to endure the ridicule of schoolmates of having parents addicted to crystal meth who were stealing and dealing was pure torture for them.

Aunty was among those with good intentions by helping the ohana living at the beach parks. Out of pure aloha she gave; the hot food and basic and camping necessities were very much needed and appreciated. She provided a warm dry place to sleep many nights, for my family and others like us; Aunty went "beyond the call."

She was amongst just a handful of community leaders who advocated for a homeless shelter on the Windward side. It is extremely disheartening to see family and friends vehemently opposed to such an "outrageous" idea!! "Not in our backyard" was their slogan. "Maybe somewhere in the back roads, not where the community could see such poverty on a daily basis" was their premise. Aunty fought hard and had the transitional shelter built in a convenient location close to stores, schools and on the bus line, being as most of us had no transportation.

Thinking back reminds me of that old saying "Give a man a fish you feed him for a day, teach that man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Aunty offered families odd jobs around the property or with Health Center projects. By working toward financial independence from public assistance, this above all else offered hope and a sense of self worth to myself and my family.

I was blessed to be formally employed with the Health Center in their Native Hawaiian Mentoring Program *Ku I Ka Mana* loosely translated "I am a reflection of those strengths you instill in me." As mentors we shared with the youth our gifts, talents and especially our loving encouragement towards a drug and alcohol free healthy lifestyle. It was the beginning and continues to be a chance of giving back what Aunty has bestowed on me as well as to my family.

Now ten years later we continue to be drug free. John has been working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the past ten years and I have a permanent position with the State at the Youth Correctional Facility. We own our own home and are contributing members of society.

We continue to be thankful of the graciousness of Jesus Chris and Aunty's loving kindness and aloha. We are humbled by our life experiences and our many shortcomings, and take ownership of it all. This is what Aunty has instilled in our lives. She has been a life long encouragement and an example of spiritual perseverance. We will always love, honor and cherish her presence in our lives.

Mahalo,



John and Bonnie Silva